

PREPOSITIONS OF PLACE

Prepositions of place tell us where something or someone is.

CORE PREPOSITIONS

AT

Definition: A specific point or place, often linked to an activity.

Examples:

- She is at the bus stop.
- We met at the cinema.

Use: Points, institutions, events.

Avoid: Not for “inside” areas.

Don’t confuse with: in, on

IN

Definition: Inside an enclosed space or area.

Examples:

- The dog is in the garden.
- They live in London.

Use: Rooms, buildings, countries, containers.

Avoid: Not for surfaces.

Don’t confuse with: into (movement)

ON

Definition: Touching and supported by a surface.

Examples:

- The book is on the table.
- There’s a mark on the wall.

Use: Tables, floors, walls, screens.

Avoid: Not for general institutions.

Don’t confuse with: onto (movement)

POSITION — HIGHER / LOWER

ABOVE

Higher than, not touching.

Examples: The picture is above the sofa. / Birds flew above us.

Use: Height comparison.

Avoid: Not for covering.

Don’t confuse: over

OVER

Higher than, often covering or crossing.

Examples: The bridge is over the river. / Clouds are over the city.

Use: Across, covering.

Avoid: Not always same as *above*.

Don't confuse: above

BELOW

Lower than.

Examples: The valley is below the hill. / Temperatures are below zero.

Use: Vertical comparison.

Avoid: Not usually contact.

Don't confuse: under

UNDER

Directly beneath.

Examples: The cat is under the table. / Shoes are under the bed.

Use: Close vertical position.

Avoid: Not for abstract "less than" (grammar).

Don't confuse: below

BENEATH

Formal word for "under".

Examples: The box was beneath the tree. / A letter lay beneath the pillow.

Use: Literary descriptions.

Avoid: Casual speech.

Don't confuse: under

UNDERNEATH

Completely covered by something.

Examples: Keys were underneath the paper. / The child hid underneath the blanket.

Use: Emphasis on hiding.

Avoid: Very formal contexts.

Don't confuse: under

CLOSE / NEXT TO / NEAR

NEXT TO

Immediately beside.

Examples: She sat next to me. / The shop is next to the bank.

Use: No space between.

Avoid: If distance exists.

Don't confuse: near

BESIDE

At the side of.

Examples: The table is beside the bed. / He stood beside her.

Use: Slightly formal.

Avoid: Meaning “apart from”.

Don’t confuse: besides

BY

Close to.

Examples: She waited by the door. / The house is by the river.

Use: General nearness.

Avoid: Not exact contact.

Don’t confuse: next to

NEAR

Definition: Not far from something.

Examples:

- The school is near the park.
- They live near the station.

Use: General closeness — distance is short but not touching.

Avoid:

- Do not normally add *to*:

near the station (correct) near to the station (formal/old-fashioned)

Don’t confuse with:

close to (stronger meaning and always uses *to*)

close to the station (correct)

CLOSE TO

Very near.

Examples: The hotel is close to the beach. / She stood close to the window.

Use: Stronger than *near*.

Avoid: Don’t drop *to*.

Don’t confuse: near

ALONGSIDE

Side-by-side, parallel.

Examples: The boat is alongside the pier. / A car stopped alongside us.

Use: Parallel objects.

Avoid: Casual everyday speech.

Don’t confuse: beside

FRONT, BACK, OPPOSITE

IN FRONT OF

Directly before something.

Examples: He stood in front of the door. / The car is in front of the house.

Use: Facing direction.

Avoid: Time meaning.

Don't confuse: before (time)

BEHIND

At the back of.

Examples: The garden is behind the house. / Someone is behind you.

Use: Opposite of *in front of*.

Don't confuse: back of (informal)

OPPOSITE

Directly facing.

Examples: The bank is opposite the post office. / She sat opposite him.

Use: Across and facing.

Avoid: Long distance across.

Don't confuse: across from

INSIDE & LIMITS

INSIDE

Within boundaries.

Examples: The cat is inside the house. / Food is inside the fridge.

Use: Closed spaces.

Avoid: Open surfaces.

Don't confuse: in

OUTSIDE

Not in a building/place.

Examples: Wait outside. / They played outside the school.

Use: Opposite of *inside*.

Avoid: *outside of* (BrE).

Don't confuse: out

WITHIN

Inside limits (formal).

Examples: Stay within this area. / The castle is within the city.

Use: Restricted space.

Avoid: Casual speech.

Don't confuse: inside

BEYOND

Further than.

Examples: The village is beyond the hills. / The road continues beyond the bridge.

Use: Distance past a limit.

Avoid: For movement description.

Don't confuse: past

GROUPS AND SURROUNDINGS

BETWEEN

In the middle of two (or more) separate things.

Examples: She sat between her parents. / The café is between two offices.

Use: Clear separate items.

Avoid: Large groups.

Don't confuse: among

AMONG

Surrounded by many.

Examples: He walked among the trees. / She felt safe among friends.

Use: Groups without clear separation.

Avoid: Only two things.

Don't confuse: between

AMONGST

Same as *among*, more formal/poetic.

SURFACES & CONTACT

ON TOP OF

At the highest surface.

Examples: The box is on top of the cupboard. / Snow lay on top of the car.

Use: Layers.

Avoid: Overuse in formal writing.

Don't confuse: over

AGAINST

Touching for support.

Examples: He leaned against the wall. / Put the ladder against the tree.

Use: Physical support.

Avoid: Meaning “opposed to”.

Don’t confuse: next to

ACROSS / AROUND / THROUGH

ACROSS

From one side to the other.

Examples: The park is across the road. / A bridge goes across the river.

Use: Width.

Avoid: Deep enclosed spaces.

Don’t confuse: over

AROUND

On all sides.

Examples: Trees grow around the lake. / A fence runs around the garden.

Use: Surrounding.

Avoid: Topic meaning (*about*).

Don’t confuse: surrounding

THROUGH

Inside something from one side to the other.

Examples: Light comes through the window. / A road goes through the forest.

Use: Enclosed path.

Avoid: Open fields.

Don’t confuse: across

AMID / AMIDST

Surrounded by (formal).

Examples: A cottage stood amid fields. / Calm amidst chaos.

Use: Literary.

Avoid: Conversation.

Don’t confuse: among

PAST

After a reference point.

Examples: The café is past the bridge. / Walk past the shop.

Use: Direction relative to something.

Avoid: No reference point.

Don’t confuse: beyond

BEFORE

(place, formal)

In front of (formal).

Examples: He stood before the king. / The statue stands before the building.

Use: Ceremonial tone.

Avoid: Everyday speech.

Don't confuse: before (time)

MCQ PRACTICE

- 1. The keys are ___ the table.**
a. at b. in c. on d. over

- 2. The children are ___ the classroom.**
a. on b. in c. at d. by

- 3. We will meet ___ the bus stop.**
a. in b. on c. at d. over

- 4. There is a picture ___ the wall.**
a. on b. in c. at d. under

- 5. She works ___ the hospital.**
a. on b. by c. at d. over

- 6. The cat is hiding ___ the bed.**
a. on b. under c. over d. behind

- 7. They live ___ London.**
a. at b. on c. in d. by

- 8. The shop is ___ the bank and the café.**
a. among b. behind c. between d. across

- 9. The bus stop is ___ the school.**
a. opposite b. under c. over d. in

- 10. He sat ___ his friend.**
a. in b. beside c. on d. across

- 11. The dog is sleeping ___ the sofa.**
a. in front of b. over c. under d. between

12. There is a café ____ the corner.

- a. by b. at c. over d. in

13. The village is ____ the mountains.

- a. beyond b. under c. inside d. against

14. She left her phone ____ her bag.

- a. on b. in c. at d. near

15. The students waited ____ the school gate.

- a. under b. behind c. at d. over

16. She is ____ school now.

- a. in b. at c. on d. to

17. We were ____ the bus.

- a. in b. on c. at d. over

18. They sat ____ the car.

- a. in b. on c. at d. beside

19. We had dinner ____ the table.

- a. in b. at c. on d. over

20. The plane flew ____ the city.

- a. above b. over c. across d. behind

21. The teacher stood ____ the students.

- a. between b. among c. beside d. near

22. The temperature is ____ zero.

- a. under b. below c. over d. beyond

23. A river runs ____ the town.

- a. across b. through c. over d. past

24. Please wait ____ the office door.

- a. before b. in front of c. opposite d. near

25. The pharmacy is ____ the post office.

- a. near b. next to c. by d. across from

26. The students are ___ the library.

- a. at b. in c. on d. into

27. My brother is ___ college.

- a. in b. on c. into d. at

28. She walked ___ the room.

- a. in b. into c. at d. on

29. There is a cat ___ the garden.

- a. into b. in c. at d. onto

30. Put the books ___ the shelf.

- a. on b. onto c. at d. in

31. The cups are ___ the table.

- a. onto b. in c. on d. at

32. The teacher stood ___ the two students.

- a. among b. between c. over d. near

33. The children played ___ the trees.

- a. between b. among c. onto d. next to

34. The plane flew ___ the mountains.

- a. above b. between c. near d. across

35. There is a bridge ___ the river.

- a. above b. over c. among d. onto

36. The bus stop is ___ the school.

- a. next to b. near c. among d. between

37. The pharmacy is ___ the bank.

- a. near b. among c. next to d. over